

Charles Mulford Robinson papers

Ms. Coll. 1010

Finding aid prepared by Kevin Stuart Lee.

Last updated on April 07, 2020.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2014 August 18

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Robinson, Charles Mulford, 1869-1917
Title	Charles Mulford Robinson papers
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1010
Date [bulk]	1880-1924
Date [inclusive]	1831-1932
Extent	2.8 linear feet (7 boxes)
Language	English
Abstract	Charles Mulford Robinson (1869-1917) was a newspaper editor, author, and professor celebrated as one of the United States' first urban planners and early proponents of the "City Beautiful" movement. This collection features several of his urban improvement reports delivered to communities which solicited his services as a "civic advisor," as well as the personal correspondence of him and his wife Eliza; newspaper clippings about his life, death, and activities; scrapbooks; poems, prose-pieces, hymns, and plays composed by Robinson in his spare time; photographs; and other personal records from throughout his life.

Cite as:

Charles Mulford Robinson papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Charles Mulford Robinson was a journalist, author, and pioneer of city planning in the United States. Born April 30, 1869 at Ramapo, New York, Robinson was the son of Arthur and Jane Howell (nee Porter) Robinson. Shortly after his birth, his family moved to Rochester, where he received his education and obtained a B.A. from the University of Rochester in 1891. From 1891 to 1902, he worked as the editor of the Rochester *Post-Express*, the Philadelphia *Ledger*, and the New York *Municipal Journal*, as well as serving as contributing editor to several other publications. In 1899, he wrote a series of three articles on municipal improvement in the *Atlantic Monthly* which led to an invitation from *Harper's* to prepare a similar series on urban development in Europe. Following this experience, he published a number of books and reports on civic art and town improvement. In 1913, he was appointed the first Professor of Civic Design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a position he held until his death on December 30, 1917.

Scope and Contents

The collection contains an assortment of documents collected and saved by American city planner, professor, and author Charles Mulford Robinson and his wife Eliza Ten Eyck Pruyn Robinson between 1880 and 1934.

The first series, Civic advising, documents, to a limited degree, Robinson's career as a city advisor. This material comprises several reports suggesting municipal improvements which Robinson delivered to various communities in his capacity as a civic advisor, as well as newspaper articles and related articles. Cites include Freeport, Illinois; Greensboro, North Carolina; Hannibal, Missouri; and Syracuse, New York. This series also documents, through letters and newspaper clippings, the controversy over George Eastman's plan to construct a series of tenements in Rochester, which was opposed by Robinson and other members of the community.

The second and third series contain correspondence addressed to Robinson and his wife. Robinson's correspondence, which dates between 1889 and 1917, reveals acquaintanceship with a number of big names in the Progressive and City Beautiful movements, including author and economist Richard T. Ely, and labor leader Samuel Gompers. The bulk of the material documents clubs which Robinson was invited to visit. The correspondence of Eliza Robinson, Charles Mulford Robinson's wife, is largely personal preceding Robinson's death in 1917, and includes notes from her parents, Augustus and Catilina Pruyn, her husband, and one from John C. Olmsted. Following Robinson's death, however, the bulk of her

correspondence discusses her donation of her late husband's professional library to Harvard University in 1921. Both sets of correspondence are arranged chronologically.

The fourth series, Newspaper clippings, contains a great number of newspaper articles about Robinson from 1898 to 1926, including those about Robinson's visits and civic advice to Denver and Honolulu, his death in 1917, and the dedication of several memorials to him in the ensuing years. Researchers interested in published accounts about Robinson should be aware that many of the scrapbooks (located in Series VII) also contain newspapers clippings that were arranged by Robinson, himself.

Like many 19th century gentlemen, Robinson wrote and published several works. Series V. Poetry and prose, written by Charles Mulford Robinson contains a number of poems, hymns, and prose pieces written by Robinson, as well as several poetry collections and two plays Robinson co-authored. Many of the items in this series are handwritten, and it is unclear how many of them were published. However, there are a few items that were printed and were clearly published, although the publication is frequently unknown.

Although it appears that Robinson's professional library was donated to Harvard in 1921, this collection contains a small number of books and pamphlets owned by him and his wife. The items are arranged alphabetically by title of work. Robinson also compiled a number of scrapbooks, one of which documents his wedding and includes lists of telegrams received, newspaper notices, and the invitation.

The final series, Family and personal papers, includes some family papers, but the bulk the material is a largely miscellaneous group of Robinson's personal papers. The family material includes forms excusing Robinson's father from service in the Civil War and an address given by his grandfather to the Hartford County (Connecticut) Agricultural Society in 1830. There are also a number of photographs, primarily featuring buildings, individuals, and one family portrait of Robinson, his wife, and several others. The miscellaneous personal records include collected autographs and books plates, Robinson's personal stamp, a few financial records, his 1891 passport, and records from a club headed by Robinson.

Highlights include his advising reports to several communities and a number of his creative works. The collection overall provides a broad view into the life of Charles Mulford Robinson and his wife, and attests to their character. It will be of interest to historians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States and urban planning, and biographers interested in one of America's first native world-recognized urban planners.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2014 August 18

Finding aid prepared by Kevin Stuart Lee.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may exist. For most library holdings, the Trustees of the University of

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Source of Acquisition

Gift of Benjamin Solganick, 1962.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Correspondence
- Pamphlets
- Scrapbooks
- Writings (documents)

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Robinson, Eliza Ten Eyck Pruyn, 1870-1956

SUBJECT(S)

- Art
- Authors
- City planning
- Families
- Poetry
- Urban beautification--United States

Collection Inventory

I. CIVIC ADVISING, 1905-1917.

	Box	Folder
"City Planning Progress 1917," Specifications for a City Plan, Decatur itinerary, 1917.	1	1
"Greensboro, N.C.", undated.	1	2
"The Improvement of Hannibal, Mo.", 1910 August.	1	3
"Park System for Freeport, Ill.", 1911.	1	4
"'Record' for Syracuse, NY", 1905.	1	5
Rochester tenement debate, letters and newspaper clippings, 1912-1913.	1	6-7
"The St. Joseph of the Future", 1910 April.	1	8

II. CORRESPONDENCE OF CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON, 1889-1917.

	Box	Folder
Announcements for the wedding Bessie Rockefeller and Charles Augustus Strong and the XLVI Annual Convention of the Psi Upsilon Fraternity of the University of Rochester, 1889.	1	9

Card for the King's Sons' Fair, 1891.	1	10
Letters from Abraham Benedict, Charles W. Gorley, and James C. Connolly, 1894.	1	11
Letters from Rossiter Johnson and Kate L. Strong, 1895.	1	12
Letters from Rossiter Johnson, Florence Larrabee Lattimore, and Walter Rowlands, 1896.	1	13
Letter from Sam H. Adams, 1897.	1	14
Letters from Charles T. Barney, G. Caulkins, Jno. Y. Cuyler, E. Frost, William R. Stewart, and illegible, 1898.	1	15
Letters from H.M. Alden, George H. [Ellwanger], William George Jordan, Milo Roy Maltbie, and H. Masse, 1899.	1	16
Letters from the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society, John R. Commons, Richard T. Ely, Samuel Gompers, F.S. Lanch, Charles M. Loring, H.H. Powers, [F.W.] Rollins, and Edwin R.A. Seligman, 1901.	1	17
Letters from Sylvester Baxter, Richard T. Ely, W. Garnett, Washington Hadden, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, St. Clair McKelway, Charles Moore, John Charles Olmsted, and illegible, 1902.	1	18
Letters from D.R. Francis, [Y.] H. Gallinger, Jessie S. Gardner, Carter H. Harrison, Dr. M.D. Mann, Horace G. Wadlin, and Rolla Wells, 1903.	1	19
Letters from Samuel H. Adams, the Clover Club, E.S. Martin, Rolla Wells, James Y. Young, 1904.	1	20
Letters from Claude Bragdeon, John B. Henderson, S. North, and Will H. Pritchard, 1905.	1	21
Cards and fliers from the California Club, the Fort Orange Club, the Jonathan Club of Los Angeles, the Keats-Shelley Memorial in Rome, and	1	22

the University Club (in Honolulu), 1906.

Cards from the California Club, the Duquesne Club, the Fort Orange Club, and the Genesee Valley Club, 1907.	1	23
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Letters from Cosmos Club, George Goler, H.D. Hartley, and Frank F. Knothe, 1908.	2	1
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Card from El Paso Club, 1909.	2	2
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Card from the Arts Club, 1910.	2	3
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Card from the University Club of Urbana Champaign, 1912.	2	4
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Cards from the Fort Orange Club and the Harvard Club, 1913.	2	5
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Invitation from the American Commission of Municipal Executives and Civil Leaders and card from the Garden Club, 1914.	2	6
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Cards from the Missouri Athletic Association, St. Louis and the University Club of Chicago, 1916.	2	7
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Letters from Mary Hail, William H. McElroy, T.H. Pattison, and unknown, undated.	2	9
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III. CORRESPONDENCE OF MRS. ELIZA ROBINSON, 1889-1934.

	Box	Folder
Letter from her mother, Catilina Pruyn, 1889.	2	10
Cards and invitations from the University of Rochester and letters from John C. Olmsted and her mother, Catilina Pruyn, 1891, 1893.	2	11

Letter from her parents, Augustus and Catilina Pruyn, 1906.	2	12
Letters from Marnie [Connolly], 1914.	2	13
Letter from Charles Mulford Robinson, 1916.	2	14
Letter from Charles Mulford Robinson, 1917.	2	8
Letter from Redmond & Co., 1918.	2	15
Letters from Cornhill Company; Andrew Wright Crawford; William Coolidge Lane, Librarian at the Widener Library, Harvard; and Warren Manning, 1920.	2	16
Letters from Charles Hoeing; William Coolidge Lane, Librarian at the Widener Library, Harvard; Warren H. Manning; L.C. Marshall; and James Sturgis Pray, 1921.	2	17
Letters from Leigh H. Pierson and William S. Riley,, 1922.	2	18
Letter from James Sturgis Pray, 1923.	2	19
Letters from Edward R. Foreman, Karl B. Lohman, and Thomas H. Mawson, 1924.	2	20
Letter from illegible (includes clipping), 1934.	2	21
Letter from Annie Doyle, undated.	2	22

IV. NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, 1898-1926.

Box Folder

1898.	2	23
1899.	2	24
1901.	2	25
1906.	2	26
1907.	2	27
1908.	2	28
1911.	2	29
1912.	2	30
1913.	2	31
1916.	2	32
1917.	2	33
1918.	2	34
1920.	2	35
1922.	2	36
1924.	2	37
1925.	2	38
1926.	2	39
undated.	2	40

V. POETRY AND PROSE, WRITTEN BY CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON.

	Box	Folder
Poems, 1888-1911, undated.	3	1
Books of poetry which include Robinson's poems, 1888-1894, undated.	3	2
Plays, co-authored by C.M. Robinson, 1889-1890.	3	3
Prose pieces, circa 1891.	3	4

VI. PRINTED MATERIAL.

	Box	Folder
"Arbor Day," State of New York, Education Department, 1905.	3	5
"Daily Food" and "Daily Texts, with Verses of Hymns: Adapted for General Use and Suited for Every Year", 1880-1886.	3	6
"Doctor Papa," by Sophie May, 1877 June 18.	3	7
"Keep Our City Clean," Civic Improvement League of Saint Louis, 1903.	4	1
"Modern Civic Art," by Charles Mulford Robinson, preface to the fourth edition, 1917 October 1.	4	2
"Little Pillows or Good-Night Thoughts for the Little Ones," by Frances Ridley Havergal, 1883.	4	3
"On that far level," a poem by Robinson Smith, undated.	4	4
"Passages from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal," distributed by Robinson	4	5

Smith, undated.

"The Sands of Time, a Book of Birthday Gems, containing a Text, a Proverb, and a Sentiment for Every Day in the Year," compiled by Thomas W. Handford, 1886.	4	6
"The Smoke Nuisance," by Frederick Law Olmsted and Harlan Page Kelsey, as published by the American Civic Association, Department of Nuisances, Series II, Number 1, 1908 March.	4	13
"The Third Ward Catechism," compiled by Charles Mulford Robinson and "Messages for The King's Daughters, or The Manners of the Court," by Annie Darling, 1888-1909.	4	9
"Tree Poetry: A Parting Remembrance from Charles M. Loring," compiled by Florence Barton Loring, undated.	4	10

VII. SCRAPBOOKS.

	Box	Folder
"Biographical Department, Contents", after 1885.	4	11
"Chat and Clippings" columns, Vol. 1, 1892-1893.	4	12
"Chat and Clippings" columns, Vol. 2, 1893.	5	1
"Chat and Clippings" columns, Vol. 3, 1894.	5	2
<i>The New York Times Saturday Review of Books and Art</i> , 1897-1901.	6	1
"References" and inserts.	6	2

"Scrap Book", 1881-1886.	6	3
Wedding Scrapbook, 1895 March 20.	6	4

VIII. FAMILY AND PERSONAL PAPERS.

FAMILY PAPERS, 1781-1867.

	Box	Folder
Letter from John Pierce to Reverend Robertson, 1781 January.	7	1
"An Address delivered before the Hartford County Agricultural Society" by Charles Robinson, Esq. (grandfather of Charles Mulford Robinson), 1830 October 28.	7	1
Letters from Edward C. Robinson (possibly uncle of Charles Mulford Robinson) to Charles Robinson, Esq., 1834 March 3, June 12.	7	1
Invitation to invest in a canal at Niagara Falls, 1847.	7	1
Emma Gilson Dinsmore, declaration of U.S. citizenship, 1860.	7	1
Form 39 informing Arthur Robinson (father of Charles Mulford Robinson) he is drafted by the Union, 1863 July 18.	7	1
Certificate of exemption from draft for Arthur M. Robinson due to "Natural Feebleness of Constitution", 1863 August 10.	7	1
Certificate of non-liability for military service for Arthur M. Robinson, 1864 August 30.	7	1

Arthur Robinson, tax form, 1865 April 1.	7	1
United States consulate payment slip authorizing \$15.20 to Messers. Robinson and Ogden, 1867 January 7.	7	1
Undated card with names of composers, undated.	7	1
Photographs depicting homes, buildings, family members of Charles Mulford Robinson, and individuals; Lenten lily card; and the Seal of Albany, 1869-1917.	7	2

PERSONAL PAPERS.

	Box	Folder
Autographs of Susan B. Anthony, Charles W. Eliot, and E. Robinson; also an autograph book, 1881, undated.	7	3
Bookplate and calling cards, undated.	7	4
Business address and references of C.M. Robinson, undated.	7	5
Engraving and personal stamp, undated.	7	6
Financial papers (including: a number of overseas checks, 3 blank Rochester Trust and Safe Deposit Company envelopes, and several letters from the same bank to Mrs. Robinson after her husband's death. Also included are a telephone bill to Mrs. Robinson and 2 sheets with stock calculations), 1891-1930.	7	7
Humdrum Club records, 1902-1916.	7	8
Items inserted into Charles M. Robinson's Bible, undated.	7	9
Memorials to Charles M. Robinson, 1924.	7	10

<i>Municipal Journal and Engineer</i> , call for articles, circa 1901.	7	11
Passport and letter of introduction for C.M. Robinson, 1891 June 8.	7	12
Pressed and dried flowers and leaves, undated.	7	13
Schematics of the Steamer <i>Kaiserin Auguste Victoria</i> , undated.	7	14
Sketch Club admittance card, undated.	7	15
University of Illinois, faculty and student directory, 1917.	7	16
University of Illinois, Horticulture 36: History of Landscape Gardening, textbook, 1915.	3	8